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DIRECTORATE OF
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Intelligence Memorandum

Taipei and the Nixon Doctrine

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
17 April 1970

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Taipei and the Nixon Doctrine

Summary

The Republic of China believes the 1970s will be a crucial period in its history. Taipei views its declining support abroad, together with recent shifts in US Asian policy, as a growing threat to Nationalist interests, especially its claim to sovereignty over all of China. The Chinese leaders do not necessarily fear that the US will negate its defense commitments and "sacrifice" Taiwan for an accommodation with Peking, but they interpret any US action in Asia that appears to alter the status quo as a betrayal of Nationalist interests. Taipei is now particularly concerned that current US moves are encouraging worldwide interest in ending Peking's isolation--a development that could result in both a substantial reduction of Taipei's international standing and a weakening of its justification for continued "mainlander" monopoly of political power on the island. The Nationalists realize, however, that in the absence of a viable alternative they have no choice but to continue to rely on the US. Their public reaction to date has been restrained because they are unwilling to

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communicate a sense of impotency while the scope of US intentions toward Peking is still ill-defined. Thus, the coming visit to the US of Vice Premier Chiang Ching-kuo will probably be utilized to plumb US intentions at the highest levels. Taipei will probably continue to resign itself to US policies and actions directed toward recognition of Communist control of the mainland, but only so long as the Nationalists are not obliged explicitly to concur.

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A Changing US Asian Policy

1. Taipei has always exhibited extreme sensitivity and suspicion concerning the reliability of US diplomatic and military support--a reflection of a deep, but almost subconscious fear that Washington will ultimately move to recognize the fact of Communist control of the mainland and significantly alter the US role in Asia. The beginning of US disengagement in Vietnam, in conjunction with the enunciation of the Nixon Doctrine last July, has in Nationalist eyes given new immediacy to this gloomy prospect, which Taipei quite understandably would prefer never to face.

2. From mid-1969 on, the Nationalists were confronted with a series of what they saw as the first concrete manifestations of this new and, for them, ominous turn in the power structure in Asia. The reduction of 7th Fleet patrolling in the Taiwan Strait, the easing of restrictions on US trade and travel to Communist China, and the US failure to provide a squadron of F-4s shook Taipei and contributed to its increasingly pessimistic interpretation of the Nixon Doctrine.

3. These developments have also led to greater Nationalist sensitivity in regard to Tokyo's future role in Asia. Chiang Kai-shek has always attached great importance to Taiwan's relationship to Japan, believing that Nationalist claims would remain viable so long as US and Japanese support held firm. Taipei has been jolted by recent statements of Japanese Prime Minister Sato expressing interest in closer contacts with Peking. Nationalist fears that Japan could not be relied on in the future were by no means relieved by the recognition of Tokyo's security interest in Taiwan that was contained in last November's Nixon-Sato communiqué on Okinawan reversion. On the contrary, agreement on reversion, undertaken without advance consultation with Taipei, was particularly unsettling to the Nationalists because they saw it as an indication that

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Washington and Tokyo intend to exclude them from consultations on important regional matters related to Taiwan's security. Most immediately, however, the Nationalists have been concerned over the fate of the US bases on Okinawa; Taipei considers these a primary facet of its own defenses. The agreement on reversion, together with Washington's continued reduction of grant military aid and its pressure on Taipei to reduce the oversized Nationalist military establishment, all serve to undermine the credibility of Taipei's claimed intention to retake the mainland--the raison d'etre of the Nationalist regime.

4. The most distressing development for Taipei, however, has been the resumption of Sino-US talks in Warsaw last January. Taipei has strongly opposed the Sino-US ambassadorial-level talks since their inception in 1955. By Nationalist lights, this form of US consultation with Peking has been tantamount to an open American "two China's" policy and has done substantial damage to Taipei's international credibility. It is apparent, moreover, that the Nationalists regard the current series of meetings as a much more serious matter than mere resumption of past practice, when the contacts took place against a background of predictable impasse and increasing US involvement in Asia. Taipei is undoubtedly disturbed by the unprecedented secrecy surrounding the sessions--a veil of silence that underscores its fears that any development at Warsaw will be presented to the Nationalists as a fait accompli.

A Muffled Response

5. For the most part, Taipei's public response to these developments has been oblique and restrained. The government-controlled press, depicting Taipei as "the most faithful ally of the US and the most put-upon victim of misplaced trust," has complained of US "opportunism" but at the same time has expressed confidence that the current talks at Warsaw will prove as futile as previous US "appeasement" of the Communists. Taipei has also been pointedly

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reminding Washington of its commitment to Taiwan by upgrading and publicizing requests for military aid. The Nationalist press is missing few opportunities to score the point that China was "lost" because of the denial of US military assistance following World War II. Chiang's personal obsession with the maintenance of the Nationalist military establishment was recently illustrated when he deliberately used inflated estimates of Communist capabilities in an attempt to persuade important US visitors of Taipei's need for sophisticated military hardware.

6. Nationalist diplomatic reaction has primarily been an effort to coax the US to reiterate its political and military commitments to Taiwan. In late March, for example, Taipei centered its attention on the motion before the US Senate to repeal the 1955 "Formosa Resolution." Foreign Minister Wei, in a conversation with the US ambassador in Taipei, expressed concern over the Nixon administration's failure to oppose the motion, implying that Taipei views the matter as a possible first step toward US cancellation of its commitment to Taiwan. Wei then requested written assurances that repeal of the resolution would not affect US defense obligations and asked Washington to do what it could to minimize publicity of the Senate proceedings, out of deference to the Nationalist government's "internal problems." Other official comments also imply that--with the exception of the Warsaw talks--the Nationalists are less concerned over the substance of the US initiatives than over their possible psychological effects on Taiwan and abroad. Nationalist legislators have recently criticized the regime's "laxness" in responding to the current threat, and Chiang Kai-shek probably believes that unrest can be undercut by new, firm statements of US support for his government.

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[redacted] the Central Standing Committee in February adopted a series of foreign policy and propaganda guidelines to deal with the current trend in US Asian policy. Some of the proposals, such as formation of a Northeast Asian security organization and increased diplomatic activity abroad, were billed as means to reinforce Taiwan's position as an internationally viable entity not overly dependent on the US. Others called for pressure to obtain early US reaffirmation of opposition to Peking's entry to the UN, and strengthened liaison with US congressmen sympathetic to Taiwan. The committee's program also urged exploitation of the recently published Amerasia papers to draw a parallel between the loss of China in 1949 by "appeasers of Peiping" within the State Department and the apparent direction of current US Asian policy. The tactic of creating a face-saving position paper as an end in itself is typical of the posturing within the KMT government. But it also indicates that Washington can expect a more energetic Nationalist lobbying effort as Taipei's fears of US policy changes begin to crystalize. Indeed just before his departure for the US Chiang Ching-kuo publicly called for US support for the formation of an East Asian security organization.

9. Taipei has responded to the threatened loss of Japanese support with similar tactics by urging Tokyo to develop a more active and independent policy in opposition to Peking.

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Holding the Diplomatic Line

10. The Nationalists view the recent US moves with particular alarm because they know that other nations will be greatly influenced by American actions and, as Taipei says, when Washington "takes one step, others want to take three." As a result, Taipei in the past has always devoted considerable attention to keeping its diplomatic lines with other countries from unravelling. Following French recognition of Peking in 1964--a jolting blow for the Nationalists--Taipei has demonstrated increasing flexibility and imagination in protecting its international position.

11. The most successful Nationalist effort has been "Project Vanguard," a program providing economic and technical aid primarily to Africa. By projecting a "can do" image in Africa, Taipei has picked up valuable diplomatic support, particularly in the United Nations. Moreover, hoping to exploit Peking's inept diplomatic stance during the Cultural Revolution, Taipei has been seeking contacts with states recognizing the mainland--such as India, the Netherlands, and Indonesia--and is providing aid and technical assistance to African states, including Ethiopia, Ghana, and Libya, whose UN positions do not favor Taipei.

12. Taipei's growing ties with Israel, whose recognition of Peking in 1950 was never acknowledged by the Communists, is one of the Nationalists' most interesting initiatives. Contacts, which began in 1967, have since expanded and may be intended to strengthen Taipei's independence of the US by providing the Nationalists with an alternate source of

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military training and equipment. During the past three years, Taipei has been receiving Israeli military training, particularly in paramilitary operations _____

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13. Even more dramatic, however, has been the Nationalists' flirtation with the USSR. In 1967, Chiang Kai-shek issued provisional authorization for a cautious affirmative response to contacts initiated by the Soviets and for formal meetings between official representatives; since then, talks have been held in several capitals around the world. In 1968, he ordered the Nationalist propaganda machine to refrain from direct or extravagant attacks on the USSR and allowed Soviet journalist Victor Louis, who has been used by Moscow as an unofficial envoy elsewhere, to visit Taiwan and meet with Chiang Ching-kuo and other high-ranking officials. For the first time since the Nationalists left the mainland, Chinese specialists are now allowed to attend professional conferences in Communist states, and unofficial representatives such as newsmen are encouraged to maintain an open attitude toward contacts with their Soviet counterparts. Chiang's interest in the USSR is primarily based on his hope of exploiting Soviet hostility toward Peking in order to dramatize the mainland's isolation and enhance Taipei's international position. The Nationalists probably realize the limited potential of their contacts with the USSR, but they believe their

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cause has benefited from Soviet demarches to other nations intended to discourage recognition of Peking and weaken support for it in the UN.

But the Leverage is Limited

14. As suggested above, these efforts to reinforce Taipei's international position have enjoyed considerable success. A greater contribution, however, has been made by the intransigence and self-imposed isolation of Peking. This situation is now being altered as Communist China returns to a more pragmatic and attractive foreign posture. Peking, faced with mounting Soviet pressure, appears to be clearly on the diplomatic "make," intent on improving its international position. In view of recent developments, the Nationalists may fear that it is Peking rather than the US that will determine the strength of the adverse current it sees developing.

15. Taipei's pessimism has been deepened by the growing interest shown by a number of Western states in cultivating relations with Communist China at Nationalist expense. Canada and Italy took the lead when they opened recognition talks with the Chinese Communists last year. Until recently these discussions have been snagged on the issue of Taiwan, with Peking demanding a formal acknowledgement of its sovereignty over the island. In March, however, the Chinese backed away from this harsh demand and may now be ready to reach an agreement with Ottawa and Rome that will simply provide for Canadian and Italian recognition of the People's Republic of China as the sole government of China--the same basic formula that led to French recognition in 1964. When this breakthrough is reached, other states--such as Belgium, Austria, and Luxembourg--will be tempted to join the bandwagon and recognize the Communist regime.

16. The Nationalists are no doubt concerned over the impact of such a diplomatic setback to their position in the United Nations. For 21 years, reaffirmation of Taipei's status in that international

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forum and its associated organizations has been a mainstay for Taiwan's claims. The Nationalists were particularly concerned over the effect on the vote last November of the prevailing interest in establishing contacts with Peking. At that time, Italy, Belgium, and Chile shifted from opposition to abstention on the admission of Peking, and Ghana, Libya, Mauritius, and Nigeria moved from abstention to support. The votes of Ghana and Mauritius gave Taipei an unpleasant surprise which, added to the independent stance of Chile, fed the Nationalists' apprehension over the dependability of their blocs of support in Africa and Latin America. Taipei's narrow margin of eight votes with 21 abstentions on the resolution calling for the admission of Peking, and the vagueness of several nations' commitments to support the Nationalists in the future is another reason why Taipei must view the timing of recent US initiatives with alarm.

The Problem of the Thirtieth Province

17. Challenges to the government's international status not only affect its relations with other states but also its position on Taiwan. For 21 years the Kuomintang has rationalized its legitimacy in terms of an eventual return to the mainland, and morale within the bureaucracy and the military depends on that aim. Furthermore, the Nationalists have justified their consistent denial to the Taiwanese of greater participation in national political affairs by arguing that as the government of all China they cannot allot Taiwan province greater representation than its relatively small population merits. This argument is only valid, however, as long as the KMT's claims to wider sovereignty are viable. In this regard, the Kuomintang has utilized US support--and the prestige such support offers--to maintain its control over the Taiwanese. Consequently, fluctuation in Taipei's international fortunes and its reading of the firmness of the US commitment have always had a direct effect on the Kuomintang's view of the threat the Taiwanese majority may eventually pose to continued "mainlander" rule on the island.

18. The government now appears increasingly concerned that internal pressure from the Taiwanese

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will become much greater if US Asian policy continues in its present direction. The most dramatic development in this context was the escape from Taiwan of P'eng Ming-min, a leader of the handful of politically articulate Taiwanese who oppose mainlander political domination. P'eng, who had been under surveillance since his release from prison in 1964 after serving 13 months for circulating subversive literature, fled to Sweden last January under mysterious circumstances--a development which has caused heads to roll in the Nationalist security services. Given their concern over recent US policy moves, not to mention their need to find a scapegoat, some Nationalist officials have claimed to see a US hand in P'eng's escape. Their suspicion may have been encouraged by P'eng's subsequent application for a US entry visa; Taipei immediately made known to Washington its strong objection to P'eng's possible entry into the US.

19. P'eng's views are, of course, extremely embarrassing to the Kuomintang, which considers this an especially inopportune time for him to speak out freely. Whether P'eng actually can add impetus to the adverse international trend the Nationalists see developing, however, is questionable. In the past, the small and fragmented Taiwanese independence groups have been little more than a nuisance to Taipei. Regardless of the future effectiveness of Taiwanese dissidence, however, the problem of maintaining "mainlander" legitimacy on the island is sure to loom larger and larger in Kuomintang eyes as pressure mounts on Taipei's international position.

The Uncertain Future

20. The Nationalists realize that, in the absence of any practical alternative, they have little choice but to continue to rely on Washington and to accommodate to US policy, no matter how distasteful. The uncertainty of the present situation has led the Nationalists to stop short of a full-scale display of pique toward Washington. The US attitude is the keystone of its future, and Taipei is unclear as to how far Washington is willing to go in developing

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a rapprochement with the Chinese Communists. As a result, the leadership probably sees little to gain by communicating to the bureaucracy and public a sense of impotency in the present situation, especially while there is a chance that an intransigent stance by Peking will again save the day. The coming visit to the US of Vice Premier Chiang Ching-kuo will probably provide the Nationalists with a vehicle both to plumb US intentions and to restate publicly and privately Taipei's determination to defend its claims. President Chiang has requested US officials to speak with complete candor to his son. He said, "It is better for us to know the limits of US thinking, even if it should be somewhat distasteful to us."

21. Despite its concern over developing trends, however, Taipei has by no means reached the panic stage. The Nationalist leadership does not appear to believe that the US will abrogate its defense commitment to Taiwan in return for an agreement with Peking. Furthermore, there have been no indications that the present prospects for diminished US political support and diplomatic setbacks elsewhere will lead Taipei to alter significantly its own international tactics. On 18 March, for example, Chiang Kai-shek told the KMT Central Standing Committee that the Nationalist position can best be preserved by a hard-line approach to the current erosion of its status. Comparing the situation to that in 1949, Chiang said that no external pressure of any kind should be allowed to weaken the determination of the Nationalists to defend their claims. The Nationalists will almost certainly react to Canadian and Italian recognition of Peking, as they did with France in 1964, by applying Taipei's longstanding policy of withdrawing from any capital that establishes formal ties with the mainland.

22. Taipei's reaction over the longer term is difficult to assess, in part because it is unclear at what point the Nationalists will conclude that a developing Washington-Peking rapprochement requires decisive action to avoid an imposed solution. The response would depend partially upon whether Chiang Kai-shek or a successor, perhaps less deeply

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committed to Nationalist claims, were in power. Grudging acceptance of a lesser status for the "Republic of Taiwan" or a bilateral political agreement between Peking and Taipei are developments that cannot be ruled out as long-run possibilities. At present, however, the outlook is for little alteration in Taipei's policy of fighting for preserving the status quo in spite of US initiatives and other international developments.